

A Certain Mr. Braund

Branch 8

Michael Braund

A certain Mr. Braund, active in Australia between 1901 and 1908, attracted a wide range of comments. He was “the greatest gentleman”, an “immaculate Englishman”, a “charming fellow”, he had “that rare gift of anticipation that divided the good from the great”, “was particularly well known for his acrobatics”, men like xxxx were wonders”, he was “a brilliant performer”, he was “a merry hearted Englishman”, and he was one of a few well-known individuals whose “powers at billiards are not to be sneered at”. He was said to have had “average-sized hands”¹, was “cat-like” and was “a perfect type of an athlete”. Further, he was described as a “clean-shaved smartly-set-up cove who keeps a sports material shop at Bath, Somerset”, while Mrs. Braund once owned a women’s clothing shop in Fulham. He told others what he thought: “do you think I am going to stop there to be shot at by that black devil” he once said, and criticised Brisbane for being a trying place, with too many flies, beetles and winged pests.

What else might be useful in identifying Mr. Braund? He was involved in a divorce case in Australia and attracted pointed comments afterwards: “xxxx is undoubtedly a great draw among the ladies” and “xxxx is now the cynosure² of many female eyes”. One more clue may help: he was once called a legless veteran (intoxicated, perhaps)

But, who can this be? Here is some extra help: he was a cricketer who played for England against Australia, and was famous for his all-round skills on the cricket pitch. He bowled leg breaks, could handle a bat very well and was a renowned slip fielder. He also played against Lewis Braund in Armidale, in Australia.

Leonard Charles Braund is the mystery man (branch 8). He has already appeared in the *Journal* (Volume 60, March 1997 pp. 619-620, author not stated; Volume 85, June 2003 p 1180, by Alan Braund; Volume 86, September 2003, pp 1200-1201, by Don Braund; Volume 100, March 2007, pp 1547-1549, by John Fletcher) and in Len Braund’s book *A Race Apart*, page 57. These commentaries captured the essence of Len’s cricketing achievements. The purpose of this paper is to fill in some of the gaps and to explain the background to some of

the situations and descriptions offered above. It also has an Australian perspective, revealing what some of the Australian newspaper reporters thought of Len.

Len was born in Clewer, Berkshire, on 18 October 1875 to John Braund and Sarah Ann Hester.³ Aged five at the 1881 census, he was living at 20 Manor Villas in Mortlake, and in 1891 at 20, Halford Road in Richmond. In both censuses, John's occupation is listed as artist/portrait painter/sculpture, while Len is still a scholar.⁴ By the time of the 1901 census, Len was a married man, living at 13 Frenchmen's Avenue in Taunton with his new wife, Ruth Mary (née Hancock).⁵ His association with cricket started in 1892 when, until 1898, he was on the ground staff at the Oval.⁶ While on the books of Surrey cricket team over three seasons, Len also played for Thames Ditton.

The Elmbridge Hundred website lists Len as one of the "famous (and infamous) folk who lived, loved, and worked here, or made momentous visits". Len's profile announces that he was "(o)ne of the best-known professional all-rounders of his day".⁷

His play improved markedly, but he left Surrey in 1898 to join Somerset. Failure to take up residence in Taunton until after the deadline, and because of Surrey's complaint over this residency issue, Len didn't start playing for Somerset until 1901.⁸

Before leaving Surrey, Len played a few games for the London County side (to obtain more experience) and, eventually, was eligible for registration by the Somerset county side in 1898.⁹ His name was also mentioned in connection with cricket in Pretoria, South Africa. Murray and Vahed, in their book on cricket in South Africa between 1884 and 1914, describe how Len was a coach there¹⁰ during 1898/99 (as related by the Tancred brothers¹¹). Len obviously had talent as a batsman, for he was a member of an England team that played the Australians at Truro in 1899.¹² The match was played at the Tremorvah Cricket Ground, just outside Truro, and was the first recorded match to be played on that ground. Len played for W.G. Grace's XI in the same year, when he scored 125, again against the Australians. A game for Somerset against the "Colonials" brought a further 82 runs. In all, during this period, Len amassed 270 runs against the Australians.¹³



Len Braund

The year 1901, in which Len excelled as a member of the Somerset team, provided the evidence that he was ready for international duties.¹⁴ Runs and wickets in abundance meant that, by the end of November 1901, Len was in Australia playing in the first test. He bowled well in England's comprehensive win.¹⁵ As a warm-up match, the English team played against a New England 22. The New England team included Lewis Braund, of Armidale (branch 1), and the England team, Len Braund.

C. Marsh, l.b.w., b. Braund	1
L. Braund, b do.	2

Braund, bowled Braund

The extract shows that Lewis Braund was bowled by Len Braund for two runs. The match report stated "C. Marsh was given out leg before wicket to Braund, and L. Braund, after

knocking up two, was bowled by Braund".¹⁶ There was no further comment from the journalist! It was Len's day – he scored 72 runs in England's second innings and took seven wickets for 51 runs. One wonders whether Lewis and Len discussed their common name? Lewis, now 30 years old, may have retained some of his Devonshire accent after arriving in Australia as a ten-year old, an accent most likely recognised by Len. I can't imagine that Lewis and Len did not talk about their name. They may not have known their individual ancestry, or how they were related, but surely one of them was inquisitive?

The English team was criticised in the English press (*The Daily Mail*, for instance) prior to its departure for Australia, but the New Zealand press was more positive. Len attracted particular attention:¹⁷

After much candid criticism and many bitter attacks, Mr. Maclaren will take out one of the best all-round sides that has yet left England. As Mr. A. O. Jones said at the Leicester Football Club's dinner, it is the best fielding side which has ever gone out, while Leonard Braund, the brilliant young Somerset professional, says that it is a young men's team, that many of the men who are going have to make their international reputations, and will strain every nerve to ensure success.
This may be taken to be the spirit which animates the team, and looking through the names one cannot help being struck with the fact that Braund has very fairly summed up the position.

A positive spin on the English team

On the boat trip to Australia the team provided entertainment for themselves and fellow passengers with, amongst other things, a rendering by Len, and accompanied by Blythe on his violin, of the sentimental ballad 'The Blind Boy'. "The song was not to everyone's taste".¹⁸

Focus on the England team continued. An interesting article appeared in *Table Talk*,¹⁹ in Melbourne, on 16 January 1902:

Mr. L. C. Braund

A Notable English Cricketer Interviewed

In view of the many foolish statements that have been made about the English cricketers, it was thought advisable to get an expression of opinion from one of their number, and for this purpose no more fitting subject could be chosen than the celebrated English professional, Mr. Len Braund.

Len Braund was sitting at the breakfast table, meditating over the last match....

While sitting and meditating, Len gave his views on Australian cricket pitches and some individuals, on his own and others' bowling styles, and on the Australian team and the crowds. The *Table Talk* reporter couldn't resist a comment about Len: "Len Braund, who is a perfect type of an athlete, has had a highly interesting cricketing career. He then went to Somersetshire (*sic*) ... and has done some of his most remarkable feats". And, "Len Braund is perhaps the best all-round man in the present English team. He is a batsman who may make his century at any time, a leg break bowler, who comes back over two feet and sticks up the best of batsmen". *Table Talk* went further a few weeks later, lamenting England's poor showing in the test matches:²⁰

In the last three matches ... they held the winning position. But they badly wanted another bowler, though Braund bowled splendidly. He (Mr. Spofforth²¹) speaks in high terms of Len Braund's ability as an all-round man, a first-rate bat, bowler and fieldsman, and a splendid trier.

"Cricket Chatter" in *The Arrow (Sydney)*²² brought up the suspect bowling action of one John Saunders, an Australian test bowler who played against England in the 1901/02 series. A poem was written in his honour, which included a reference to Len:

You have not Len Braund's supple wrists,
 Nor Jessop's cross-but bang ;
 You have not Victor Trumper's wrists,
 Yet we don't care a hang !

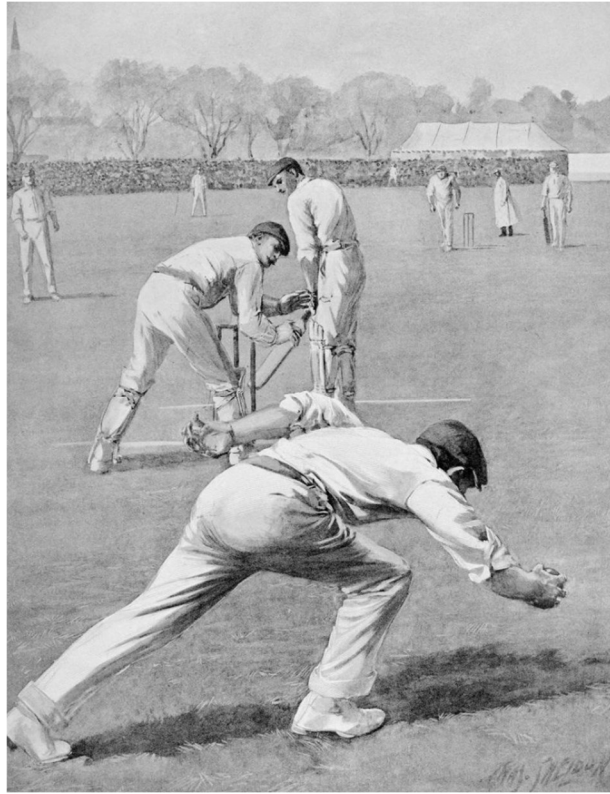
Len's supple wrists

England lost the test series in Australia in 1901/02 by four games to one.

ALL	WKT.	BOWLERS	WKT.	RUNS				
1	314							MACLAREN 167
2	390							HAYWARD 174
3	546							TYLDESLEY 142
4	649							JESSOP 87
5	659	TRUMPER	1	111	NS-W-1 IN	432		GARNETT 78
6	690	NOBLE		75	do do 2 do	209		BRAUND 20
7	695	HOPKINS	1	84	ENGLAND 1 IN	769		QUAIFE 62
8	719	KERMODE	4	162	BATSMEN			JONES 113
9	769	CLARKE	1	134	MCGAHEY	32		LILLEY 127
		M'BEATH	3	166	GUNN	70		SUNDRIES 37
					IN FOR	769		

The scoreboard, from the 1901/02 Test series, in Sydney²³

The next series, in England between May and August 1902, saw the usual discussions and analyses in the press. "Our Boys in England" looked at the probable make-up of the English team and came to a firm conclusion: "There is one matter that is certain. Len Braund's name will be first on the list. On his performances in Australia and since his return he is a 'cert'".²⁴ Len did make the team (the match was drawn), his main contribution being the famous catch to dismiss Clem Hill.²⁵



Clem Hill dismissed²⁶

Len featured prominently in the 4th test, where he (65 runs) and Jackson (128 runs) scored 193 runs out of an England total of 262. The *Daily Graphic* had a full-page report of the match (which Australia won by three runs!), including a set of caricatures of some of the stars of the match:²⁷



Braund justifies his batting reputation

Len's innings was also described as "heroic" in support of Jackson's 128.²⁸

A few weeks before Len's next trip to Australia late in 1903, he strained himself badly while playing cricket at Bath but was confident that he would recover before reaching Adelaide.²⁹ Luckily, Len did recover quickly and was able to sail on the *Orentes* from Tilbury with the rest of the team.³⁰

England won this test series three matches to two. In the third test (won by Australia), Len's fielding was praised, but his bowling was not. He scored only 38 runs and took two wickets for 106 runs. The Adelaide respondent of *The Referee* wrote "... he seems to have lost the spin which characterised his bowling last tour" and "... if Braund could bowl as he did two years ago, the Englishmen's attack would be stronger".³¹ In a game against Queensland in November 1903, Len faced an Aboriginal bowler, one Albert Henry. Henry was extremely fast, so much so that most batsmen were bowled and slip fielders were unable to hang on to catches. Len played it safe:

Len Braund was England's opener. The first ball (from Henry) was deflected from the bat without Braund knowing how or why. The second hit the fence before Braund had *completed his stroke*. The third was slower, and Braund, preferring a graceful dismissal to a valorous demise, gently poked it to the safe hands of point and retired.³²

Len was also quoted as explaining why he backed away from one of Henry's deliveries – "What," cried Len, "do you think I am going to stop there to be shot at by that black devil".³³

Len's bowling appears not to have improved later that year when, in Glamorgan's match against Gloucester, many runs were scored against him.³⁴ Around the same time, Len was used as a yardstick for the performance of an English tennis player: "The antipodean is an unreliable performer, and, like Len Braund as a bowler, has many 'off days' – days when his 'placing' is the very opposite of good".³⁵ On 23 November 1904, Len was initiated into the Lodge of Brotherly Love as a freemason. His profession is "Sports Depot" and his address in Argyle Street in Bath. His membership was terminated in 1913 because of an overdue subscription.³⁶

In March 1905, Len and Ruth suffered a dreadful loss when their daughter, Esme Violet, aged only two, died.³⁷ Len's international prospects did not seem very bright at this time. He was left out of the team for the 1905 test series in England (which England won 2-0), to the surprise of the *Evening Journal* correspondent.³⁸ The same newspaper offered an explanation for Len's omission when analysing the "prominent famous" players from Somerset during their game against the Australians:³⁹

county eleven. Then there is Len Braund, the despised of Surrey, who qualified by residence for the western county. He gained fame first for his dazzling fielding at slip, afterward as a slow leg-break bowler—indeed, his methods were so successful that they have been copied all over England and Australia. There are so many leg-break bowlers about now that batsmen no longer dread them, and perhaps that is why Braund has been less deadly with the ball during the last two seasons. While his bowling seems to have deteriorated, his batting has improved by leaps and bounds, and at the end of the first month's play in England this year he was sixth on the list, with an average of 60.40. He is a hard driver, with a great heart, and has notched his century in a test match on the Adelaide Oval. Lionel Palairet, the old

Len the batsman

But, only a few weeks later, Len received a boost (though whether he was aware of it is another matter, for it was in an Australian newspaper) when, with the Australians still in England, an analysis of English batting and bowling against the Australians revealed that Len was second in the batting table (with an average of 64.33, and only 0.01 runs below the table-topper) and was still bowling well overall. The analysis included the prowess of one Australian bowler, likening it to the "fire and life and energy (that) spin from the fingers of Len Braund, his lines having a spirit in them beyond their proper complement of syllable and assignment of metre". Poetry indeed.⁴⁰

Len did his bowling average against the Australians no favours when, in the last game of the tour, he helped W.W. Armstrong to reach 2,000 runs for the 1905 tour. He did this by

lobbing down a few easy balls, wide of the wicket, so that Armstrong could reach the magical number. “Mid-on”, the writer for the *Leader* newspaper, questioned the validity of cricket records being disfigured by such behaviour in a first-class match, but the “good natured, easy going Len Braund was chosen to assist in the burlesque” and was happy to help.⁴¹

Even though Len was short of Test practice in 1905, he continued to play for Somerset and even led his own XI against the Bath Association in October of that year.⁴² He appeared in the British patents lists,⁴³ a photograph of The Braund “Perfect” Leg Guard accompanying Len’s sports store advertisement.⁴⁴

Len Braund appears in the British patent lists with an improved leg-guard for cricketers, a protecting pad or flap continuing from the top of the leg-guard half-way down on the inside of the right leg and outside of the left leg, on the former protecting the tibia bone, and on the latter the femur and fibular bones, which receive no protection from any existing leg-guards.

The patent

LEN. C. BRAUND,
MEMBER OF SOMERSET COUNTY CRICKET XI. MR. A. C. MACLAREN'S AUSTRALIAN TEAM, 1901-2.
 ENGLAND XI, 1902, AND M.C.C. ANGLA-AUSTRALIAN TEAM, 1903-4. DR. W. G. GREEN'S LONDON COUNTY TEAM.
 ALSO CAPE TOWN, JOHANNESBURG, AND PRETORIA, AFRICA.

**Complete ATHLETIC OUTFITTER
 and SPORTS PROVIDER . . .**

Cricket, Tennis, Badminton, Croquet,
 Football, Golf, Hockey, Bowls, Billiards. &c.

Most Noted House in the West of England.
 Lowest London Prices for Selected Goods.
 Special Terms to Schools and Clubs.

Repairs executed on the premises by experienced hands.

Patentee of Len. Braund's "PERFECT" LEG
 GUARD, used by the Leading Cricketers.

Write for Catalogue, Post Free.
N.B.—Orders by Post or Telephone despatched same day.

TELEPHONE. 30X BATH. **13 ARGYLE STREET, BATH.**

The Braund "Perfect" Leg Guard.

Photograph of the “Perfect” leg guard⁴⁵

The perceived decline in Len’s bowling at Test standard extended into 1906. He had established himself as a notable spin bowler, both for Somerset and England, and it was inevitable that emerging talent would be compared to him. One such was A. E. Bailey of Somerset whose performances led one newspaper to declare that Somerset “has apparently found the assistance it has much needed *since the decline of Len Braund began*” (my italics).⁴⁶ He wasn’t picked for the Test tour of South Africa in 1906, presumably because of this decline. He continued playing for Somerset, however, and played a large role in benefit matches. He played a series of hospital matches at Twickenham, Hounslow, Bletchley and

Rushton (in Northants). He assisted, too, in the benefit game for Arthur Chester, a former first-class cricketer and umpire, as well as selling an autographed bat and raffling another, fetching £20. In all, he helped to raise £450 for the hospitals and the Chester's benefit.⁴⁷

Things improved for Len in 1907. He returned to all-round form, topping the scores in Somerset's defeat to Middlesex⁴⁸ and played in two tests against the visiting South Africans in July and August. In spite of his underwhelming performance (one run and no wickets in the 2nd test, and 42 runs and bowling only one over in the 3rd),⁴⁹ his Somerset form must have impressed the selectors for he was invited, by the MCC, "to make the trip to Australia as members of the team which will tour the Commonwealth in 1907-8". "Recorder", of *The Express and Telegraph*, was most positive about Len's return to the Test fold: "Who can forget Len Braund's lightning catches at slip. If for nothing else Australia will be glad to extend to him the hand of friendship for the third successive trip. His return to all-round form this year no doubt accounts for his inclusion, and his deadly leg-breaks will tempt many men to their fall. In batting, bowling and fielding he will be more than useful."⁵⁰

The team seems to have created a couple of distractions on the boat trip to Australia. Len tried to introduce a new type of cricket ball to the team, but its construction of twine within a rubber casing was unsuccessful, the rubber being too soft and splitting easily. On the same trip, Len was Vice-President of the "Tom Tits" Society whose purpose eluded the correspondent. Apparently, each member, when initiated, had to answer three questions and each member on meeting another had to say 'Sign, please' and put three fingers to his forehead.⁵¹ In England's game against South Australia, Len was badly affected by the sun, but still had time to excel with both ball and bat. "Len Braund, brainy as ever, tripe to the champions, especially the left handers, but a terror to the young batsmen, who like the ball to come straight at them".⁵² In this match, Len took five wickets and scored 160 runs in England's massive win.⁵³

England, and Len in particular, did not perform well on this tour of Australia. The team lost the series by four matches to one, Len scoring 233 runs, but his bowling produced only five wickets. John Fletcher makes the comment that Len was a character off the field, enjoying horses, beer, his bowler hat and a good singsong.⁵⁴ Now other events overtook Len's life.

Four years earlier, during the test series in Australia, Len had, according to newspaper reports, become involved with one Ruby Wallace. Claims made by her husband, Charles, described how Len and Ruby exchanged foot-tapping under a table and how Ruby had written to Len, including one letter, addressed to “My darling old Len”, wondering whether this Len had thought of “your old *kiddy* once since yesterday”. Ruby was supposed to have committed adultery with several men at her sister’s house, called *Novar*, in Melbourne, Len’s supposedly being one of these.⁵⁵

Now, in 1907, the alleged events had reached the Melbourne courts in a high-profile divorce case.⁵⁶ In the end, although Charles Wallace was granted a decree nisi for the dissolution of the marriage on account of misconduct, Len’s name was listed as one of those with whom Ruby had had dealings.⁵⁷ Of course, the situation attracted good-natured observations in the press: “Who’s the most popular man in Australia with the ladies at the moment. Easy. Why, Len Braund”;⁵⁸ commenting on a recent batting display by Len, “The Rocket”, in the *Wellington Times*, described Len’s batting technique – “It was noticed that Braund made remarkable little use of his feet in getting to the ball, especially to the slow bowling. But he may have remembered he had been charged with making too much use of his feet in another quarter”;⁵⁹ “a show entitled ‘The pastimes of a Professional Cricketer’ is now in progress in Melbourne, with Len Braund in the lime-light”;⁶⁰ “Every time Braund caught the eye of the crowd he was assailed by loud inquiries from various individuals whether he had heard from “Kiddie” lately, how that lady was, and numerous other impertinent inquiries”;⁶¹ “Petitioner in the Wallace case alleged, in support of Braund’s reputation as a gay dog, that the latter had shown him letters couched in endearing terms from several Sydney ladies of the sort that don’t teach in Sunday school”;⁶² “Quite a bevvv (*sic*) of girls going down to see Len Braund arrive (in Fremantle)”;⁶³ “... Len Braund, of toe-tapping fame...”;⁶⁴ “Len Braund tap(s) the ball as gracefully and decorously as he tapped a certain lady’s foot”;⁶⁵ “On every occasion Braund bowled a ‘maide-Novar’ he was enthusiastically cheered. There is no such word in cricket now as an over, it is ‘Novar’”.⁶⁶ Len wasn’t the only cricketer to attract an irreverent moniker: one of his fellow test players, called Hardstaff, was given the name “Hotstuff”.⁶⁷

In the face of all these comments, Len generally was relaxed and good-natured. But not always. On one occasion, a member of the New South Wales cricket team, over drinks, made reference to the Wallace affair and Len responded by damaging the jaw and breaking two ribs of said cricketer. The New South Wales team was without the services of the 'offender' for the rest of the season.⁶⁸ There is no record of any punishment being meted out on Len.

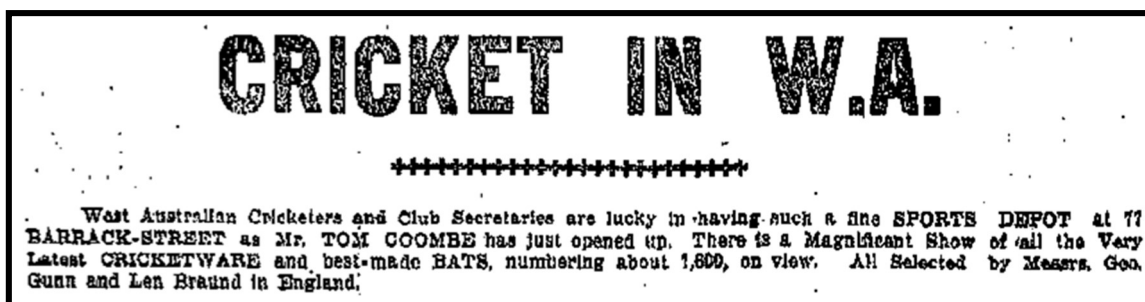
Len's last Test match was against Australia in Sydney in February 1908. Both his performances in the test series and his involvement with the Wallace divorce case prompted positive and negative comments in the press. "Break-up", in *The Empire*, was dismissive of the claims made by Ruby Wallace, insinuating that she was stirring up trouble. Len, "Break-up" added, was dragged into the whole affair.⁶⁹ "Break-up" appeared to have changed his mind a few weeks later when he bemoaned that fact that Len had bragged about receiving amorous letters from several women, thus upholding his reputation as "a gay dog" and demonstrating a drop in moral standards compared with English cricketers of twenty years earlier.⁷⁰ "Braund was about the only objectionable member of the M.C.C. team⁷¹..."; "If an Australian Eleven man were to have behaved in England, like Len Braund did on the last day of his stay he would doubtless have been dubbed a 'beastly Cawlawndial⁷² larrikin"; and "... never showed his true form here, having too much of the company of Len Braund to suit his play. They were mates throughout the tour...".⁷³ The "Novar" incident was still in the press as late as 1921, when the late Governor-General of Australia, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, was created Viscount Novar. The reports couldn't resist a comparison with the Wallace divorce case and referred to a man in the Melbourne cricket crowd shouting "Give Braund a Novar".⁷⁴

In spite of the press coverage that Len received, his cricketing prowess was still held in high esteem. Just before the first Test, Gilbert Jessop (one of the team members) commented, in an open letter to the team captain, on Len's and others' potential contribution to the upcoming series. George Gunn and Len were picked out by Jessop as the pair to whom "we look for the steadying influence on your batting. ...Quite the most valuable member of your team should be Leonard Braund – a brilliant slip, a dogged batsman, and a bowler full of brains. His experience – for this is his third trip – should be of the utmost service to you".⁷⁵

Australian Test cricketer at the time, M.A. Noble, commenting on England's team, placed Len first in the position of short slip.⁷⁶

Life continued for Len after his return from Australia. He played cricket in County Wicklow, in Ireland, in 1908/9, at the invitation of Stanley Cochrane, a very keen, and rich, cricket enthusiast. Cochrane laid out a private cricket ground near Bray in County Wicklow and hired a few English professionals, including Len, to play at the Woodbridge Cricket Club.⁷⁷ He continued playing cricket for Somerset, and was only one of three professionals retained by the club. His services were recognised by the granting of a benefit game in August 1908.⁷⁸ Len's choice of opponent was Surrey and was played at Bath. Unfortunately, it rained for most of the three days and the match was abandoned. Len had not taken out the necessary insurance against such circumstances and he ended up out of pocket.⁷⁹

He dabbled in advertising, lending his name to a range of "best-made bats".⁸⁰ Interestingly, Tom Coombe's shop was called the Sports Depot, a name that Len himself would use later.



Len endorses best-made bats

Similar endorsements followed for Hopwood and Co. in Brisbane and a second set of endorsements, with Victor Trumper,⁸¹ for Tom Coombes.⁸² Len's leg guards, possibly the "Perfect" leg guards described above, were advertised by G. Horsburgh & Co. of Maryborough in Queensland at 18/6 a pair.⁸³ Len's own Sports Depot in Bath most likely opened in late 1904 and he will have sold his own brand of leg guards. Jennings adds that Len used his popularity to promote his Sports Depot shop: he and Ruth, and four children, lived above the shop.⁸⁴



Len's Sports Depot shop at 13 Argyle Street in Bath (Courtesy Janet Few)

Len made the news, briefly, in 1909 when, in a newspaper piece on Cricketers as Billiardists, his name appeared alongside that of W.G. Grace as “individuals well known in cricket, and their powers at billiards are not to be sneered at”.⁸⁵

His cricket career continued through the war years until 1920. During this period, he played for Somerset and by the time that he retired he had built up very impressive credentials:

Competition	Test	First-class
Matches	23	432
Runs scored	987	17801
Batting average	25.97	25.61
100s/50s	3/2	25/75
Top score	104	257*
Balls bowled	3805	53709
Wickets	47	1114
Bowling average	38.51	27.28
5 wickets in innings	3	80
10 wickets in match	0	16
Best bowling	8/81	9/41
Catches/stumpings	39/-	546/1

Len's remarkable cricketing statistics⁸⁶

Nearly 54, 000 balls bowled while playing for Somerset (including some from Surrey) and nearly 4, 000 in Test cricket. Over 1,1000 wickets in First Class cricket and 80 times taking five or more wickets in an innings. Catches amounted to an impressive overall total of nearly 600 and runs nearly 18, 000 in First Class cricket. His highest score was 257 not out. This total was reached in Somerset's game against Worcestershire in Worcester in June 1913.⁸⁷



Len playing for Somerset⁸⁸

He enjoyed social cricket, too, and had what may have been his last game against Australians as a member of Howard Lacy's XI against a team from Australian Headquarters at Mitcham Green in south London. Len's bowling (five wickets for 43 runs) and batting (47 runs) helped the Lacy team to a convincing victory. Interestingly, on the score card, Len is recorded as L.-Cpl. (Lance Corporal). The newspaper reporter must have been carried away by the many army ranks involved in the game. "L.C. Braund" (Leonard Charles) was shown as "Lance Corporal".⁸⁹

AUSTRALIAN HEADQUARTERS.	
Sgt. Murray, st Inkster, b Braund	7
Cpl. Dean, b Reay	37
Sgt. Sterling, c Squires, b Reay	8
Cpl. Beresford, b Reay	3
Sgt. Pearce, b Reay	2
Cpl. Teague, not out	25
Cpl. Hart, b Reay	0
Sgt. James, lbw, b Braund	16
Cpl. Munday, c Cpl. Smith, b Braund .. .	0
Cpl. Cove, b Braund	2
S.-Sgt. Hall, b Braund	1
Extras	2
Total	105
MR H. LACY'S ELEVEN.	
L.-Cpl. Braund, c Beresford, b Sterling	47
Cpl. Inkster, not out	38
F. E. Smith, run out	5
C.-P.-O. Hardinge, not out	12
Extras	21
Total (no wickets)	123

The scorecard showing L.-Cpl. Braund

Len still had more cricket in him even after retiring from the Somerset team. He turned his hand to umpiring cricket matches, between 1923 and 1938. In this time, he umpired 374 First Class matches and, between 1926 and 1929, three Test matches. One such game was between an Australian XI and Cambridge University in May 1926 and Len took the opportunity to chat with some of the visitors, bemoaning the fact that one Macartney dismissed Len twice in the game in Sydney after he had underestimated the bowler.⁹⁰ He was umpire for another Australian match in May 1930, this time against Derbyshire.⁹¹ He umpired several matches involving the New Zealand team; for example, on that team's 1927 tour of the British Isles, Len officiated in matches against Cambridge University, Middlesex, Worcestershire, the West of England, Glamorgan, Lancashire and Kent.⁹² Len was umpiring a match between Cambridge University and the visiting Australians in 1934 and complimented one of the Australian bowlers on his technique. The bowler, Tim Wall, recalled many years later, how he appreciated Len's comment that his bowling was "the best piece of fast bowling that I've seen in 20 years".⁹³

He received many plaudits for his umpiring. George Thatcher, in *The Labor Daily*, in Sydney,⁹⁴ proclaimed

UMPIRING in cricket is a gift.⁹⁵ International players have been tried in the position, but few have succeeded. Certainly, Len. Braund and Johnny Hardstaff officiated in the recent Tests in England, but they were exceptions.

Len recognised as an umpire

“Nestor”, in *The Telegraph*, in Brisbane, thought Len had won great distinction as an umpire,⁹⁵ and George Hele, himself a highly-skilled umpire, picked out Len (and Arthur Dolphin) as a Test man who had gained a front-rank position as an umpire.⁹⁶ Len himself admitted that umpiring was “not one of the best-paid jobs in the world, earning him £9 a week net for four months. Over a year, Len added, that amounts to £3 a week, “which isn’t much for a man who stands day after day umpiring and is expected to be an expert”. By this time (1939) Len had been in cricket for some 46 years.⁹⁷

During his umpiring years, Len coached teams at Cambridge University and at the South East London Sports Club. At Cambridge, during the 1920s, Len created a good impression. The reminiscences of Tris Bennett, a First-Class batsman during the 1920s, recalled the influence of Len on him. He “had me out morning and afternoon practising catching for half an hour at a time, first with the right hand and then with the left, until he made me, I was told, a first-class slip”. He praised the work of the professional coaches, naming Len in particular. Bennett also recounted how one K. L. Duleepsinhji, who played test cricket for England, acknowledged and praised Len’s help and advice in achieving success as a batsman.⁹⁸ In the 1930s, Len was also coach at the South-East London Sports Club at Ladywell. Speaking as the official coach in January 1932, Len explained to reporters that the facilities at the club had been upgraded: “The lighting is by a special type of gas installation which gives such a soft non-glaring light that it is difficult to realise that one is playing at night”.⁹⁹

According to *The Bulletin*, Len was the proprietor of the Horse and Dolphin in St. Martin's Street, London, in the early 1920s.¹⁰⁰

Because of his long association with cricket, and his obvious skills as an all-rounder, Len was used, for many years, as a standard against which the performances of others, especially those chosen in the Test sides, were compared. Between 1910 and 1950, many references were made, in the Australian press, to his achievements; his bowling style and performances, his slip-catching abilities (especially the dismissal of Clem Hill), his use of leg-theory, his catching generally, his fielding prowess, his batting and the records that he established as bowler and batsman.

In 1943, Len had his right leg amputated following a bout of arteriosclerosis,¹⁰¹ but he continued his enthusiasm for cricket. He featured in a "Where Are They Now" series in *The Argus (Melbourne)* in 1944, explaining that he was managing on his artificial leg and looking forward to many more years of cricket. The test series of 1902, and especially his catch to dismiss Clem Hill, was the most thrilling he remembered.¹⁰² Even news of the amputation brought out references to Len's Test performances in Australia – his record-making fifth-wicket stand of 192 in Sydney,¹⁰³

His left leg was amputated in 1946, but Len remained positive and cheerful, hopeful of walking on his two artificial legs by Christmas 1946. Len's hardship, coupled with the blindness of fellow Test cricketer Phil Mead, led to an appeal for funds in both England and Australia, led primarily by Herbert Sutcliffe, the England and Yorkshire cricketer.¹⁰⁴ "I am sure there will be many who will want to subscribe as a tribute to their fine sportsmanship", said Sutcliffe.¹⁰⁵ A tribute came also from a gentleman in Victoria, writing a letter to the editor of *The Herald*: "Braund's brilliant all-round deeds in Australia will never be forgotten. I met him and I found him a charming fellow."¹⁰⁶ One Adelaide newspaper included unfortunate references to Len's being 'legless': "Fallen Stars. Phil Mead Blind. Len Braund Legless".¹⁰⁷ Some words, of course, take on new meanings over time! By the time that the fund was closed, more than £6,000 had been raised in Britain alone.¹⁰⁸ In Sydney, the fund reached £124, though many people had contributed food parcels instead. The monies collected "would be sufficient to ensure a decent standard of living for the two old favorites

(sic)".¹⁰⁹ Len paid a visit to the Lord's ground, his first in three years, in August 1948, to watch the Australians play against the Gentlemen. He arrived in an ambulance before transferring to a wheelchair, from which he was able to exchange greetings with Don Bradman.¹¹⁰

He recalled his fond memories and regrets of his early days – happy days in Australia and the many friends that he made, but regrets that he would not see them again: "Ah for those times and games again!" he soliloquises. "What a pity we grow older... would love to see some of the Australian boys to talk over our friendly matches. They were great".¹¹¹

In 1949, Len, and 25 other retired professional cricketers, including the blind Mead, were invited to become honorary members of the MCC, just recognition of their collective services to cricket.¹¹²

Sadly, Ruth died on 10 August 1951, in Fulham, after 51 years of marriage. In the probate notice, Len was described as a retired professional cricketer. Ruth's estate was valued at just over £1130.¹¹³ Len died a few years later, in 1955, in Putney. He was cremated, but the location of his ashes is unknown.¹¹⁴

Leonard Charles Braund 1875-1955

Time-line

Date	Description
1875	Born in Clewer, Berkshire.
1881	Lived in Mortlake.
1891	Lived in Richmond.
1892-98	On ground staff at the Oval. Played for Surrey, London County, Thames Ditton, an England XI and a W.G. Grace XI. Coached in South Africa.
1898-1920	Played for Somerset.

1900	Married Ruth Mary Hancock.
1901-1908	Test cricketer.
1902	Wisden cricketer of the year. ¹¹⁵
1904	Lived in Bath. Ran a sports shop. Freemason (until 1913).
1905	Death of daughter, Esme Violet.
1907	Implicated in divorce proceedings in Australia.
1920s	Cricket coach at Cambridge University.
1923-1938	First Class cricket umpire.
1930s	Cricket coach SE London Sports Club.
1943	Right leg amputated in October. Lived Fulham.
1946	Left leg amputated.
1949	Honorary member of the MCC.
1951	Ruth died.
1955	Died in Fulham, aged 80.

Summary

Without doubt, Leonard Charles Braund was a cricketer. He spent most of his life playing, umpiring, coaching and watching the game. In both Tests and club matches he demonstrated impressive skills in bowling, batting and fielding. He was described as immaculate, charming, merry-hearted, legless, cat-like, a perfect athlete, a gay dog, and objectionable, and was respected as a cricketer and an umpire. He wasn't perfect, of course. His involvement in the Wallace case did him no favours and he didn't always perform well on the cricket pitch. A few years before his death he was granted honorary membership of the MCC. That, no doubt, along with the very generous response to his and Mead's benevolent fund, would have convinced Len that his services to cricket had all been worthwhile. And, of course, he was a Braund. What else matters?

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¹ Perhaps not a true Braund if the myth is accurate?

² A person who is the centre of attention.

³ 1881 census.

⁴ The National Archives, UK.

⁵ They were married on 19 September 1900 in the church of St. Mary Magdalene with St. Mathias in Richmond. His profession is no longer a scholar, but a cricketer. (Surrey, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1937).

⁶ *The Sun (Sydney)* 28 February 1939.

⁷ The borough of Elmbridge, in Surrey, corresponds almost exactly to the old Saxon Hundred of *Amelebrige*. See <https://www.elmbridgehundred.org.uk/>

⁸ Jennings 2015.

⁹ He played for London County from time to time in the years following. In 1904, for example, he played against Cambridge University, taking 13 wickets for 199 runs (at 15), securing three catches and scoring 33 runs. Cambridge won the game.

See http://static.espncricinfo.com/db/ARCHIVE/1900S/1904/ENG_LOCAL/UNIV/LONDON-CO_CAMB-UNIV_UNIV_13-15JUN1904.html

¹⁰ The Union Cricket Club (Frith 2011)

¹¹ The Tancred brothers often played against Len when South Africa and England engaged in Test matches.

¹² More details of this stage of Len's career can be found in Fletcher.

¹³ Wisden See <https://www.espncricinfo.com/england/content/player/9203.html>

14 Details can be found on Wisden's web site at
15 <https://www.espncricinfo.com/wisdenalmanack/content/story/155502.html>
16 *Camperdown Chronicle* 17 December 1901.
17 *The Armidale Express* 6 December 1901.
18 *The New Zealand Herald* 9 November 1901.
19 Carlaw 2019.
20 A social magazine that catered for both male and female readers. It included articles about politics, finance,
21 literature, arts, and social notes. Its gossip style attracted readers with articles about local notables and
22 famous people from overseas commenting on, among other things, their fashion, relationships, and social
23 engagements. It was most popular during Melbourne's boom in the 1880s.
24 *Table Talk* 27 March 1902.
25 Frederick Robert Spofforth, retired Australian test bowler.
26 10 May 1902.
27 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 28 December 1980.
28 *Critic (Adelaide)* 28 June 1902.
29 See Fletcher 2007.
30 Getty images.
31 26 July 1902.
32 *Critic (Adelaide)* 20 September 1902.
33 *The Register (Adelaide)* 21 October 1903.
34 *The Advertiser (Adelaide)* 26 October 1903.
35 *Referee (Sydney)* 27 January 1904.
36 *Sporting Globe (Melbourne)* 11 March 1939.
37 *Western Mail (Perth)* 11 December 1930.
38 *The Advertiser (Adelaide)* 20 June 1904.
39 *Chronicle (Adelaide)* 30 July 1904.
40 England, United Grand Lodge of England Freemason Membership Registers, 1751-1921.
41 Ancestry; *The Express and Telegraph (Adelaide)* 4 March 1905.
42 *Evening Journal (Adelaide)* 13 June 1905.
43 *Evening Journal (Adelaide)* 13 July 1905.
44 *The Herald (Melbourne)* 4 August 1905.
45 *The Leader (Melbourne)* 16 September 1905.
46 *The Australasian* 28 October 1905.
47 *Wellington Times (New South Wales)* 22 March 1906; *The Bulletin* 15 March 1906 Vol. 27 No. 1361.
48 See Few 2005 and Braund, A. 2003.
49 Courtesy Janet Few.
50 *Evening Journal (Adelaide)* 30 June 1906.
51 *Referee (Sydney)* 14 November 1906.
52 *The Express and Telegraph (Adelaide)* 29 June 1907.
53 Howstat.com The Cricket Statisticians.
54 *The Register (Adelaide)* 2 August 1907.
55 *The Australian Star* 11 November 1907.
56 *The Advertiser (Adelaide)* 11 November 1907.
57 Espncricinfo.
58 Fletcher 2007.
59 *The Advertiser (Adelaide)* 29 November 1907.
60 *The Advertiser (Adelaide)* 29 November 1907; *The Argus (Melbourne)* 14 December 1907
61 *Sunday Times (Sydney)* 5 January 1908.
62 *Critic (Adelaide)* 4 December 1907.
63 *Wellington Times (New South Wales)* 12 December 1907.
64 *The Empire (Fremantle)* 7 December 1907.
65 *The Riverine Grazier (Hay, NSW)* 24 December 1907.
66 *The Empire (Fremantle)* 28 December 1907.
The Empire (Fremantle) 7 March 1908.
The Empire (Fremantle) 14 March 1908.
The Empire (Fremantle) 14 March 1908.
The Clipper (Hobart) 11 January 1908.

67 *The Daily News (Perth)* 9 March 1908.

68 *Bairnsdale Advertiser and Tambo and Omeo Chronicle (Victoria)* 27 February 1908; *Gadfly (Adelaide)* 1 April 1908

69 *The Empire (Fremantle)* 7 December 1907.

70 *The Empire (Fremantle)* 28 December 1907.

71 Technically, the MCC name was used for non-Test matches. For the Test matches, the team was *England*.

72 Colonial.

73 *The Empire (Fremantle)* 21 March 1908.

74 *Sunday Times (Perth)* 23 January 1921.

75 *The Empire (Fremantle)* 28 December 1907.

76 *The Sun (Kalgoorlie)* 5 April 1908.

77 More details at https://wikimili.com/en/Woodbrook_Cricket_Club#cite_note-3

78 *The Australasian* 18 January 1908.

79 *The Queenslander* 10 October 1908; *Sunday Times (Perth)* 11 October 1908.

80 *The Daily News (Perth)* 19 September 1908.

81 A prominent Australian cricketer who played many times against Len in Test matches.

82 *Daily Telegraph (Launceston)* 5 October 1909; *Sunday Times (Perth)* 10 October 1909.

83 *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser (Qld)* 23 September 1914.

84 Jennings 2015.

85 *Referee (Sydney)* 21 July 1909.

86 CricketArchive 10 October 2009.

87 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 28 June 1913.

88 See <https://yorkshireccc.com/news/view/2510/memory-match-somerset-v-yorkshire>

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98 "When three-day cricket was worthwhile", Wisden at <https://www.espncricinfo.com/wisdenalmanack/content/story/152489.html>

99 *The Newcastle Sun* 9 March 1932.

100 *The Bulletin* v. 44, no. 2250 29 March 1923.

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102 2 October 1944.

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104 *Newcastle Morning Heald and Miners' Advocate* 4 December 1946; *Sydney Morning Herald* 25 November 1946.

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110 *The Daily News (Perth)* 27 August 1948; *The Herald (Melbourne)* 27 August 1948.

111 *The Sun (Sydney)* 6 June 1944.

112 *News (Adelaide)* 29 July 1949.

113 England and Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administration), 1858-1995.

114 <https://www.espncricinfo.com/wisdenalmanack/content/story/155502.html>

115 The Wisden Cricketers of the Year are cricketers selected for the honour by the annual publication *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*, based primarily on their "influence on the previous English season". The award began in 1889 with the naming of "Six Great Bowlers of the Year", and continued with the naming of "Nine Great Batsmen of the Year" in 1890 and "Five Great Wicket-Keepers" in 1891. Generally, five cricketers have been named each year. (Wikipedia)